of them, more especially when the latter are situated in places where jungle is dense, and there is fear of attacks from wild animals. In the Lyngam village is to be seen a high bamboo platform some 20 to 30 ft. from the ground, built in the midst of the village, where the elders sit and gossip in the evening.

All the villages, Khasi, War, Lyngam and Bhoi, swarm with pigs, which run about the villages unchecked. The pigs feed on all kinds of filth, and in addition are fed upon the wort and spent wash of the brewings of country spirit, or rice beer, the latter being carefully collected and poured into wooden troughs. The pigs are of the usual black description seen in India. They thrive greatly in the Khasi villages, and frequently attain extreme obesity.

In the Khasi villages of the high plateaux are often nowadays potato gardens, the latter being carefully protected from the inroads of pigs, calves, and goats by dry dikes surmounted by hedges.

I noticed an interesting custom at a Bhoi village in Nongpoh of barricading the path leading to the village from the forest with bamboo palisading and bamboo *chevaux de frise* to keep out the demon of cholera. In the middle of the barricade there was a wooden door over which was nailed the skull of a monkey which had been sacrificed to this demon, which is, as amongst the Syntengs, called Khlaw.

### FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS.

As in the case of houses, so with reference to furniture, the influence of civilization shows many changes. The Khasi of the present day who lives in Mawkhar * has a comfortable house regularly divided up into rooms in the European style with even some European articles of furniture, but owing probably to the influence of the women, he still possesses several of the articles of furniture which are to be met with in the houses of those who still observe the old style of living. Let us take the furniture of the kitchen to begin with. Above the hearth is slung by ropes of cane a swinging wooden framework

* Mawkhar is a suburb of Shillong, the headquarters station.

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? 1908 AR?



blackened with the smoke of years, upon which are spread the faggots of resinous fir-wood used for kindling the fire. Above this again is a wooden framework fixed on to the beams of the house, upon which all sorts of odds and ends are kept. Around the fire are to be seen small wooden stools, upon which the members of the household sit. Up-to-date Khasis have cane chairs, but the women of the family, true to the conservative instincts of the sex, prefer the humble stool to sit upon. Well-to-do Khasis nowadays have, in addition to the ordinary cooking vessels made of iron and earthenware, a number of brass utensils. The writer has seen in a Khasi house in Mawkhar brass drinking vessels of the pattern used in Orissa, of the description used in Manipur, and of the kind which is in vogue in Sylhet. The ordinary cultivator, however, uses a waterpot made from a gourd hollowed out for keeping water and liquor in, and drinks from a bamboo cylinder. Plates, or more properly speaking dishes, are of several kinds in the houses of the rich, the two larger ones being styled *ka phiang kyrkai* (female) and *ka phiang shyrwang* (male). Needless to say, the first mentioned is a larger utensil than the latter. The ordinary waterpots, *u khiew phiang kyrkai* and *u khiew phiang shyrwang*, are made of brass, the former being a size larger and having a wider mouth than the latter. The pot for cooking vegetables is made of iron. Another utensil is made of earthenware; this is the ordinary cooking pot used in the houses of the poor. Brass spoons of different sizes are used for stirring the contents of the different cooking utensils, also a wooden spoon.

In the sleeping-rooms of the well-to-do there are wooden beds with mattresses and sheets and pillows, clothes being hung upon clothes-racks, which in one house visited were of the same pattern as the English "towel horse." The ordinary cultivator and his wife sleep on mats made of plaited bamboo, which are spread on the bare boards of the house. There are various kinds of mats to be met with in the Khasi houses made of plaited cane, of a kind of reed, and of plaited bamboo. The best kind of mat is prepared from cane. In all Khasi houses are to be seen *ki kwap*, or rain shields, of different sizes and sometimes of somewhat different shapes. The large

shield of Champong) is used as a protection from rain. Those of Mateiram and Mawlong are each of a peculiar pattern. Smaller shields are used as protections from the sun or rain by the women, and there are specially small sizes for children. Then there are the different kinds of baskets (*ki thlah*) which are carried on the back, along across the forehead by a cane head-strap. These, again, are of different sizes. They are, however, always of the same conical shape, being round and broad-mouthed at the top and gradually tapering to a point at the bottom. A bamboo cover is used to protect the contents of the basket from rain. There is a special kind of basket made of cane or bamboo with a cover, which is used for carrying articles on a journey. These baskets, again, are of different sizes, the largest and best that the writer has seen being manufactured at Sawkmai, in the south-western portion of the hills. Paddy is husked in a wooden mortar by means of a heavy wooden pestle. These are to be seen all over the hills. The work of husking paddy is performed by the women. A bamboo sieve is sometimes used for sifting the husked rice, a winnowing fan being applied to separate the husk. The cleaned rice is exposed to the sun in a bamboo tray. Paddy is stored in a separate store-house in large circular bamboo receptacles. These hold sometimes as much as 30 maunds* of grain. Large baskets are also used for keeping paddy in. In every Khasi house is to be found the net bag which is made out of pineapple fibre, or of a stout, the *Assamese sibo* (*Boehmeria nivea*). These bags are of two sizes, the larger one for keeping cowries in, the cowries in former days having been used instead of current coin in these hills, the smaller for the ever necessary betel-nut. *Pán* leaves are kept in a bamboo tube, and tobacco leaves in a smaller one. Lime, for eating with betel-nut, is kept in a metal box, sometimes of silver, which is made in two separate parts held together by a chain. The box is called *ka shanam*, and is used all over the hills. This box is also used for divination purposes, one end of it being held in the hand, and the other, by means of the chain, being allowed to swing

* The maund is 82 lbs.

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custom of their own from cultivating the *lendoo*, in which case they plant certain other trees favourable to the growth of the lac insect. The villagers situated near their patches of cultivation in the forest. The villages are constantly shifting, owing to the necessity of burning fresh tracts of forest every two years. The houses are entirely built of bamboo, and, for such temporary structures, are very well built. In front, the houses are raised some 3 or 4 ft. from the ground on platforms, being generally built on the side of a fairly steep hill, one end of the house resting on the ground, and the other on bamboo posts. The back end of the house is sometimes some 8 or 9 ft. from the ground. At the end of the house farthest away from the village path is a platform used for sitting out in the evening, and for spreading chillies and other articles to dry. Some Lyngam houses have only one room in which men, women, and children are all huddled together, the hearth being in the centre, and underneath the platform, the pigs. Well-to-do people, however, possess a sitting room, where husband and wife sleep. A house I measured at Nongkhlaw village was of the following dimensions:—Length, 42 ft.; breadth, 16 ft.; height of house from the ground to the eaves, front, 9 ft.; back 18 ft. Houses are built with a portion of the thatch hanging over the eaves in front. No explanation could be given me for this. It is probably a fancy custom. In some Lyngam villages there are houses in the centre of the village where the young unmarried men sleep, where male guests are accommodated, and where the village festivities go on. These are similar to the *dekorlang* or bachelors' club-houses of the Mikirs, Garos, and Lalungs, and to the *morung* of the Nagas. This is a custom of the Tibeto-Burman tribes in Assam, and is not a Khasi institution. There are also high platforms, some 12 ft. or 15 ft. in height, in Lyngam villages, where the elders sit of an evening in the hot weather and take the air. Lyngam houses and villages are usually much cleaner than the ordinary Khasi villages, and although the Lyngams keep pigs, they do not seem to be so much an *eyesore* as in the Khasi village. There is little or no furniture in a Lyngam house. The Lyngam sleeps on a mat on the floor, and in cold weather covers himself with a

2[of the Lyngams ... in 1[

l: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7



quilt, made out of the bark of a tree, which is beaten out and then carefully woven, several layers of flattened bark being used before the right thickness is attained. This quilt is called by the Lyngams "*Ka sylliar*" (Garo *simpak*). Food is cooked in earthen pots, but no plates are used, the broad leaves of the *mariang* tree taking their place. The leaves are then thrown away after use, a fresh supply being required for each meal.

The Lyngams brew rice beer, they do not distil spirit; the beer is brewed according to the Khasi method. Games they have none, and there are no jovial archery meetings like those of the Khasis. The Lyngam methods of hunting are setting spring guns and digging pitfalls for game. The people say that now the Government and the Siem of Nongstoin have prohibited both of these methods of destroying game, they no longer employ them. But I came across a pitfall for deer not long ago in the neighbourhood of a village in the Lyngam country. The people declared it to be a very old one; but this I very much doubt, and I fear that these objectionable methods of hunting are still used. The Lyngams fish to a small extent with nets, but their idea of fishing, *par excellence*, is poisoning the streams, an account of which has already been given in this monograph. The Lyngams are omnivorous feeders, they may be said to eat everything except dogs, snakes, the *kulok* monkey, and lizards. They like rice, when they can get it; for sometimes the out-turn of their fields does not last them more than a few months. They then have to fall back on Job's-tears and millet. They eat aroids largely, and for vegetables they cook wild plantains and the young shoots of bamboos and cane plants. The Lyngams are divided up into exogamous clans in the same manner as the Khasis. The clans are overgrown families. The Lyngams have some stories regarding the founders of these clans, of which the following is a specimen:—"A woman was asleep under a *sohbar* tree in the jungle, a flower from which fell on her, and she conceived and bore a female child who was the ancestress of the Nongsohbar clan." Some of the stories of the origins of other clans do not bear repeating. There do not appear to be any hypergamous groups. As with the Khasis, it is a deadly sin to

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342 But in some huts there are no such partitions and the demarcation is made by the pillars and beams which support the roof of the hut. The small enclosures at the two sides in the front portion are known locally as Ka Kynrein. The Ka Kynrein at the right hand side of the Ka Nympei close to the Ka Kyndur generally is used for storing water. The Ka Kynrein at the left hand side of the Ka Nympei just opposite to that for storing water is used as a larder for potatoes and other provisions. The enclosures at the rear of the Ka Nympei and those remaining at its sides are used as sleeping places. The sleeping places at the sides are known as Ka Iing Kyndong and those at the rear as Ka Rumpei. In most huts there is a window in the Ka Rumpei, high up in the back wall of the hut. In some huts there is a window in the front wall, in the Ka Kyndur. In many huts there is no window at all. Besides the main door in the Ka Kyndur, there is another door to the Ka Kynrein at the right hand side of the Ka Nympei. We were informed that in Cherra the part called Ka Kyndur is termed Ka Shyngkup, and Ka Kynrein as Ka Pyngkai.

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In the centre of the Ka Nympei there is the hearth known as Ka Dypei. It is a rectangular space, about four feet and a half in length and three feet and a half in breadth, enclosed by fenders of wood. The floor of the hearth is paved with stone and mud. In the centre of it there are three small-shaped stone pieces which are known as Mawbyrsiew. On the Mawbyrsiew there is an iron triangle known as Ka Nar to hold the pots. The space of the Ka Nympei behind the hearth and in front of the Ka Rumpei is known as Jingbubkhiewja.

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Running round the edge of the Ka Nympei at a man's height there is a wooden frame supported on vertical posts; to this frame are fixed the partitions, separating the Ka Nympei from the Ka Kyndur, Ka Kynrein, Ka Iing Kyndong and Ka Rumpei. This wooden frame is known as Bahtympban or Bahtympha. Just above the Bahtympban several stout beams of wood cross the house from side to side and rest on the

352 Babtymphan. They are known as Ukhung. The Ukhung above the Dypei are placed close to one another. A little apart from this row of Ukhungs, there is a single Ukhung parallel to the others which in some huts is hollowed out and is used as a receptacle for some household articles.

342 The frame of the roof as observed from inside consists of a central ridge pole running along the length of the hut and situated above the middle of it. From the ridge pole pairs of rafters diverge on two sides, their lower ends resting on the side walls of the hut. In front of the hut, the rafters are radially spread out from the anterior end of the ridge pole which is supported by a vertical pole known as Rijit. These rafters rest on semi-circular wall at the bend of the 'U'. The ridge pole and the rafters are known as Kynshi. Besides the rafters there are thinner wooden poles similarly arranged which further strengthen the frame of the roof. They are known as Ubnoh. The small rafters which are set cross-wise on the sloping Kynshi and form each series a 'U' round the ceilling are known as U Pyniar. This frame for the roof is made on those huts where thatching grass is used, that is, in the old type of huts. In modern huts where corrugated or flat sheets of iron have been used instead of thatching grass such a frame is not required.

In the village of Mawphlang, we saw an old type hut, of Ka Lita repaired and re-built. At first the raised rectangular portion of the hut, the Ka Nympei, was reconstructed on a raised platform, with the frame for the roof above it. Then a semi-circular area was taken in front of the Ka Nympei about one-third the area of the inner compartment. Simultaneously with the making of the frame of the Ka Kyndur, the thatch was made in sections in bamboo frames. Then the roof of the hut was covered with these sections which were arranged in overlapping sheets (see plate). An old type Khasi hut is about thirty feet long; it is about twenty feet wide at the back.

343 Reference has been made to the usual pigsty adjoining each house. It is generally a small thatched shed with walls made of

pendable water supply. Villages are about two to five miles apart, and have no boundary markers. In the past, villages contained semipublic buildings and grounds: the home of the village priest (also the home of a chief if he resided in that village), the village marketplace, and tree groves, cremation grounds, or other awesome spots that were believed to be inhabited by supernatural beings. Villages today may have also one or more Christian churches, government social welfare buildings, and schools. Formerly, villages were entered through a guarded gateway; this is no longer the case, and paths feed into villages from all directions. Often several villages are nucleated into one large unit, named and also described as a "village." These were once defense units, but were so uncohesive otherwise that institutionalized rivalry obtained among the component villages. Now, they have been integrated through the agency of all-village public services, especially schools. **Housing.** The traditional Khasi house is entered through a door at the rounded end of a U-shaped ground plan, and is about 20 feet at widest extent, it is about 30 feet deep, and is elliptical or hogback in profile. Its walls are of stone blocks cemented with mud. The roof of grass thatch, supported by a bamboo frame, overhangs the walls on their outside, down to about three feet above the ground. The house is divided into two parts: the front one-third is on the ground level, floored either with stone blocks or tamped earth, and is used for storage of occupational instruments and as a shelter for poultry. The rear two-thirds is raised four feet on piles of stone blocks to a platform of planks, and is partitioned into six rooms, comprising a kitchen, areas for storage of food and water, and sleeping quarters. Furniture is minimal, and the house is totally undecorated. There are no windows, and no smoke vents. A house generally has a companion shed, walled of wood and grass matting and thatched with grass. This serves as a pigsty, but it may be partitioned also to house cows, and it may have a loft for fuel storage. Compounds often contain garden plots, and are fenced around with stone or bamboo and mud. Nowadays, the traditional house has given way to Western-style bungalows of wood and tin, especially in and around Shillong. [Cf. Mukherjee et al. 1941.]

ECONOMY. The Khasi economy is a market economy based on agriculture, and most Khasis are primary producers, sellers, middlemen, and/or providers of services in connection with markets. Khasis are often multioccupational: they produce goods for partial subsistence, and also play some part in trade. **Agriculture.** On the Shillong plateau, the major field crops are potatoes, maize, millets, and dry rice, still produced mostly through swidden farming, with a two- to three-year period of fallow, but increasingly through continuous use of a single field with the aid of ma-

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7



428 to the sisters of his wife, or to her nearest relatives if there are no sisters. The rank and titles of a deceased male descend to his brother; when no brother exists, then to the male children of his mother's sisters (maternal aunts); should the maternal aunts have no male children living at the time, then to the eldest male child of his sisters. When no relatives are to be found, the property of the deceased goes to the ruler of the country; or if a man dies leaving no relative other than wife and children, *i.e.* no relatives on the mother's side, the property in this case also goes to the ruler, who, as the wife and children cannot preserve the ashes of the deceased, takes charge of them, and for so doing takes all the property also. With regard to the inhabitants of the Lower Hills at Shellá, the custom as to succession is as follows:—Property belonging to a subject of Shellá is divided into two classes—(1) Property inherited from ancestors, which descends to the nearest of kin or to the relative of a deceased person who can perform his obsequies. (2) Property acquired during the lifetime of the holder, which is inherited by the children, whose duty it is to provide for the maintenance of their mother until she re-marries or dies.'

434 465 MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.—The Khásiás and the Syntengs are as a people prosperous. Common labourers, if adult males, can earn wages as high as one shilling per diem, and adult females as high as eightpence. The dwellings of the well-to-do 342 classes are generally constructed of masonry, with thatched roof and 352 plank floor, and divided into two or three rooms. The furniture consists of a bedstead (*charpái*), a seat or two (*morá*), some cooking utensils, and a few boxes. The ordinary peasants and poorer 342 classes construct their huts of stone, mud, or plank walls, with a 184 thatch or cane roof. These are fitted with wooden platforms or loose planks placed on the ground to serve as beds. The food 262 of the well-to-do classes consists of rice, fish when obtainable, fowl 434 or meat, curry, vegetables, oil, hog's lard, fermented and spirituous liquor. It may be estimated that the living expenses of an average-sized household of this class would be about Rs. 25 or £2, 10s. a month, valuing the articles of consumption at *bázár* prices. An ordinary husbandman or labourer lives on rice, dry fish, occasionally a 276 little meat, oil, or hog's lard. *Pán* leaf, betel-nut, and lime are essential to the comfort of all the hill people, who are inveterate chewers of *pán*. They commence at an early age, and are rarely seen without a *pán* leaf in their mouths; the females are quite

273 krem. Before I could enter a hut the occupants had to remove a man who was dead drunk. Over
352 the fireplace hangs a rack on which wood is piled up for drying; also food provisions, rice, etc. are kept dry here during the rainy season. Behind it a rack made of sturdy beams runs straight through the center and sometimes extends along the sides. On it all kinds of household items are kept. In the better houses the best dishes of shiny, polished brass and china are displayed here. This rack also serves as a partition behind which, on the sides and at the rear wall of the house, are the sleeping accommodations.
[358] Considering the very unprepossessing physical appearance of the people, it is surprising how orderly and clean the houses are kept inside.
342 In the principal towns the well-to-do have already adopted the brick building and European comfort. With the Lynngam and the Bhoi, however, we still find the pile dwelling (77). The houses

77. Gurdon, ibid., p. 32. There it is mentioned (above) that in some villages of the subdivision of the War pile dwellings are built because the main part of the house rests on firm ground on the mountain side and then extends on piles over the slope. (Cf. the Garo.) The same people still use the bachelor house.

have a length from 10 to 12 meters with a veranda which among the Lynngam is in front, among the Bhoi in the rear of the house. These people
[241] still practise migratory agriculture and therefore move their flimsily constructed houses every two or three years when they change to new fields. It follows that the Khasi house, as described above, represents an advanced construction method. That in earlier days bamboo construction was